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DIGEST OF PERIODICAL LITERATURE

CRITICISM AND THE COMIC SPIRIT

Mr. G. R. McMinn performs a grateful service in setting forth through the pages of the *Mid-West Quarterly* for January an exposition of two recent attempts to develop a better type of criticism in America. These are Bobbitt's *Masters of Modern French Criticism* and Brownell's *Criticism*. He finds a common element in both writers, namely, measure—sense of proportion—which leads them to carefully considered utterance, in marked contrast to the unrestrained patter of the ordinary American book-taster. The comic spirit, he thinks, is the true corrective, and he cites numerous examples to prove this.

METHODS OF TESTING READING

In the February number of the *Elementary School Journal* William S. Gray concludes his account of the methods of testing reading which were employed in Grand Rapids. After three thousand pupils had been tested as described in the previous article, standards of achievement were computed and applied. A series of paragraphs was selected for oral reading and another for silent reading, and the progress of the pupils through the grades was measured. The article includes these paragraphs and full directions for using them as tests, and Mr. Gray announces the publication of a monograph for general circulation.

In this connection the reference to Professor Dewey's *Schools of Tomorrow*, which appears in the editorial columns of this same number of the *Elementary School Journal*, is of interest. It is to the effect that Mr. Dewey fails to evaluate the results actually achieved by current methods of teaching reading.

ORAL COMPOSITION

There is agreement to a remarkable degree between educational leaders in England and America. This is well illustrated in an article on "Oral Composition" in the *School World* for January, written by Cloudesley Brereton. He analyzes at length the value of story-telling, pointing out its possibilities for the development of vocabulary and for

the teaching of structure. His own boyish endeavors at essay-writing, he says, were almost wholly lacking in the architectonic quality, for the reason that he studied only foreign languages, constantly translating and never constructing. Mr. Brereton calls attention to M. Bezard's books, already noticed in the *English Journal*, and points out that the distinctive merit of the French method is its insistence on the résumé.

"SPEECH SCIENCE"

Dissatisfaction with the term geography led a few radicals to adopt "earth science." Now comes Mr. C. H. Woolbert with the name "speech science" in place of public speaking or elocution. In the *Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* for January he outlines a plan for a department of "speech science" in the university, to be co-ordinate with the other principal departments. He argues for complete separation of "speech science" from English, which, apparently, he would reduce to the study of writing and the discussion of literature.

HOME READING

In *Educational Administration and Supervision* for December, 1915, appeared a brief account of the plan of home reading instituted by superintendent J. O. Engleman in the high school of Decatur, Illinois. Each book listed is assigned a certain number of credit points, and ten such points must be earned by each pupil each semester. Mr. Engleman's lists present a judicious mixture of old and new.

WHAT IS A NOVEL?

The question, What is a Novel? is answered in various ways by more than a score of well-known living authors in the February *Bookman*. The writers were "baited" with Professor Phelps's definition, "a good story well told," and responded very happily, in the main approving this definition. James Lane Allen, however, suggests that the last two words are sufficient.

STEVENSON IN THE GRADES

Teachers in the elementary schools will find much suggestion in an article on "Robert Louis Stevenson in the Grades," which appeared in the *Colorado School Journal* for December, 1915. Miss Davidson argues for Stevenson as a tonic influence and makes her point.